

Edgewood

Winter 2003

Contact Us

Edgewood Chemical Stockpile Outreach Office

1011 B Woodbridge
Center Way
Edgewood, MD 21040
(410) 676-6800

Outreach Office Hours

Monday–Friday
8:30 a.m.–5 p.m.
Other hours by appointment

**U.S. Army
Aberdeen
Chemical Agent
Disposal Facility
Public Affairs Office**
(410) 436-5253

**Bechtel Aberdeen
Public Outreach Office**
(410) 436-9507

Extensive training adds up to safety at ABCDF *Training covers all aspects of disposal process*

Neutralization of the mustard agent stockpile is scheduled to begin soon, but training for the team that will work at the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility started months ago.

“We were fortunate to start with a knowledgeable workforce,” said Rick Holmes, the deputy project manager for Bechtel Aberdeen, the company responsible for constructing and operating the neutralization facility, where more than 1,600 tons of WWII-era mustard agent soon will be destroyed. “On top of that, we have created more than 90 training courses, so our employees understand not only what the neutralization process does, but why. Our target is to have an employee who is inquisitive, so he or she goes to work and makes educated decisions.”

Many of the team members hired for the project have worked in chemical demilitarization projects elsewhere, worked at nuclear facilities, or have military experience. Others have backgrounds in commercial industries, hazardous waste or manufacturing.

“We require everyone we hire to come to the project with certain skills and knowledge,” Holmes said. “Next, we provide them with the training to give them extra information to perform their jobs safely. We are gaining tremendous momentum, and by the time we begin neutralization, this workforce will have earned the right to start.”

During the classes, which can run from one to 40 hours long, employees study job-specific information, such as draining the ton containers, laboratory operations or maintenance. In addition, overview classes cover plant operation, respiratory protection, environmental requirements, security and safety. Plus, everyone who will have access to the site must pass first aid and CPR training, a plan that will pay off for the community.

“The training program also benefits the community,” Holmes said, “because it includes first aid and CPR qualification. Our operators, who are also your neighbors, are better prepared as a result of their training should an emergency occur anywhere.”



Photo by Dan Pardoe

Dave Sandau, an emergency response planner and trainer, explains how to use a pipe patching kit during the 40-hour HAZMAT Response Class at the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility. The majority of the shift workers at the ABCDF will be trained in hazardous materials response, for both industrial chemical and chemical agent spills.

“Team members who complete the classroom training are considered qualified, but anyone who works near the mustard agent must be certified as well,” said Dave Ziegler, Bechtel Aberdeen’s training manager for the facility.

“Becoming qualified is knowledge-based. Certification is when we say, ‘Show me,’” said Ziegler, whose parent company, General Physics, is writing and managing the training. “You could tell me how to kick a field goal, but doing it is something else. We have to ensure the workers know how to do the job and are capable of doing it.”

Ziegler added that each employee has a training path to follow to prepare for working at the ABCDF.

“No matter where you work, whether you’re a doctor or a drain station operator or an office administrator, you have a training path set for you,” Ziegler said. “We’re going to make sure everyone stays on the right path.”

Once neutralization begins, four teams will work 12-hour shifts around the clock to destroy the stockpile, a process that is expected to take six months. Team members can go to work with confidence, knowing their co-workers have received the same extensive training.

"If we worry excessively about small risks, we may ignore issues far more likely to harm our families."

—Dr. John Paling,
Renowned speaker
on hazards and risks

Putting risks into perspective

Dr. Paling explains how people accept hazards as part of life

Dr. John Paling took many risks when he came to Aberdeen Proving Ground in early October. He flew on a plane. He drove a car. He walked across a parking lot.

As he will tell you, technically, all of these activities are risks. But Paling's perspective is that people must consider the amount of risk before they start worrying.

"All of us, even those in the Army, even people like me who do this for a living, tend to have an emotional response when faced with a risk," he said to an audience at the Edgewood Area of APG Oct. 9. "It's impossible to live life without risk. But, you can learn to judge how much of a hazard a risk really is."

He charts those hazards on "The Paling Perspective Scale," which ranks the amount of risk involved in daily activities.

"There is an element of risk that we are 'at home' with," he said, noting that the range tends to group around the 1 in 100,000 range, just above what he calls "effective zero" – a one in a million chance of something occurring.

"If we worry excessively about small risks, we may ignore issues far more likely to harm our families," he said.

Paling spoke not only with government employees and contractors, but also local students and senior citizens during his three-day visit to Maryland, a total of more than 700 people. On Oct. 10, he traveled to Kent County to discuss his philosophy with members of the Kent County Local Emergency Planning Council, emergency responders and government department heads. Later that day, he spoke with residents of the Heron Point Retirement Community.

Sally Breul, a resident of Heron Point and an active participant in meetings related to the destruction of the chemical stockpile at APG, said the doctor discussed the statistics of risk in a new way.

"I remember him saying that the risks of being injured due to an accident at the chemical stockpile are miniscule compared to the risks of being injured in an auto accident," she said. "But in between the statistics, he had puzzles that made you think, and I think people enjoyed that. He's an entertaining speaker and he certainly knows his topic."

The author of the book *Up to Your Armpits in Alligators*, Paling currently is working on a book, *Medics are from Mars: Patients are from Pluto*, which



Photo by Nancy Hofmann

Risk Perspectives expert and National Geographic filmmaker Dr. John Paling, left, talks with Edgewood Elementary School fourth-grade student Andy Medina about the importance of learning from experience and never giving up on one's goals, as fellow students Matthew Miller and Danielle Hensley look on.

explores communication between doctors and patients. As a former biology professor at Oxford University in England, University of California, Santa Cruz and the University of Florida at Gainesville, now his home, he also has produced Emmy award-winning wildlife programs for National Geographic.

His wildlife film experience, combined with video of his real-life, sometimes unintentional encounters with alligators, kept children entertained at two of Edgewood's elementary schools. Paling used yards of old film footage throughout his presentation to demonstrate the amount of time, effort and perseverance it takes to get the "perfect shot" for his documentaries. His talks to younger children focused on setting and achieving goals and believing in oneself. One account featured a tiny, spiky fish, eaten by a larger fish that was unable to swallow it. That fish, in turn, was eaten by a pike, which wound up spitting out both.

"The moral of the story," Paling told the students, "is never give up."

For older audiences, he lightened the mood with his talk on "dihydrogen monoxide," or DHMO, which he characterized in vivid, alarmist terminology as "a colorless, odorless liquid that may cause severe

Continued on page 4

ABCDF celebrates Marine Corps' birthday

Bechtel Aberdeen, the contractor constructing the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility, celebrated the 227th birthday of the Marine Corps during a ceremony on Nov. 7.

"Bud and Sandy Smith have organized this event for the past four years here at Bechtel Aberdeen," said retired Marine Jeff "Gunny" Evans of the event.

Participating were SSgt. Tim Pagud, SSgt. Jerry Garner, and Sgt. Dan Jones of the Marine Corps Recruiting Office in Bel Air, who read a birthday message from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. The Cake Cutting Ceremony followed, during which the guest of honor, Lee Smith, Bechtel Aberdeen project manager for the ABCDF and a 25-year Army veteran, received the first piece. The second piece was given to the oldest Marine present, Jim Garner, who then passed it to the youngest Marine present, Michael Becker.

"The passing of the second piece of cake to the youngest Marine emphasizes the fact that we care for our young Marines before we take care of our own needs," Evans said.

Bud and Sandy Smith were presented with a plaque and sweatshirts printed with the Marine Corps seal and the words "Marine Corps Families – The Few, The Proud." They began the event simply four years ago, baking a cake and bringing it to work. The event has grown, with assistance provided this year by Evans and Leah Usuari, a former Marine whose parents and grandfather were in the Marine Corps.

The Smith's son, Capt. Stephen Smith, is a Marine Corps flight instructor stationed in Kingsville, Texas.

"My husband was in the Navy, but we're a Marine Corps family because of our son," said Sandy Smith.



Photo by Doug Novin

Guest of honor Lee Smith prepares to receive the first slice of cake during a ceremony marking the 227th birthday of the Marine Corps. Smith, who served 25 years in the Army, is project manager for Bechtel Aberdeen, the company that will operate the neutralization facility that will dispose of more than 1,600 tons of mustard agent stored at APG.

"When you're part of the Marine Corps family, you know when the Marine Corps birthday is coming up. It's an important tradition."

Other ABCDF employees attending the ceremony included former Marines Jimmy Willman, Archie Hardy, Tom Norstrand, Russ Haggerty, Darryl Rouse, Ralph Williams and Louis Armstrong; Army veterans Rick Holmes and Doug Omichinski; Bechtel Aberdeen employee Seeta Parsram, whose sister is in the Marine Corps; and John and Chris Druyor and their father, Dale Druyor from the Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization, a former Marine.

"Realizing the Army Vision" at AUSA Spreading the word

Sandra Clawson-Freeo of the Army's Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization Public Outreach and Information Office, explains the Army's mission to dispose of the nation's chemical stockpile to one of several hundred individuals who visited PMCD's information booth during the Association of the U.S. Army's annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Thousands of military, civilian and industry leaders attended the October 2002 event, themed "Realizing the Army Vision."



Photo by Nancy Hofmann

"When you're part of the Marine Corps family, you know when the Marine Corps birthday is coming up. It's an important tradition."

—Sandy Smith,
Marine Corps parent

Continued from page 2

Speaker discusses how people deal with everyday risks

"It's impossible to live life without risk. But, you can learn to judge how much of a hazard a risk really is."

—Dr. John Paling,
Renowned speaker
on hazards and risks

Photo by Nancy Hofmann



Heron Point residents discuss the importance of being able to put risks into perspective with Bechtel Aberdeen Public Outreach Manager Miguel Monteverde, following Dr. Paling's presentation on Oct. 10.

burns, is a major component of acid rain, and may cause death by decreased effectiveness in automobile brakes."

"DHMO should be handled with extreme care!" he cautioned the audience at the Edgewood Senior Center, finally conceding when their chuckling told him they had discovered his secret. "Dihydrogen monoxide, as the name implies, is H₂O — just plain old tap water."

"This shows you how the presentation of information can affect how we perceive risk," he said.

Whether you choose risky behavior, or want to know if your daily activities are hazards to worry about, Paling's lessons on putting risks into perspective can be applied to daily life.

(For more information about Dr. Paling's work and a copy of The Paling Perspective Scale, see his website at www.johnpaling.com.)